

## **WRIGHT BROTHERS MASTER PILOT AWARD**

**Fairbanks Flight Standards District  
Office Honoree 2006**



**YERKES, Charles Stanley.** Charles Stanley Yerkes was born August 11, 1930, in Chicago, Illinois. He grew up with one thing in mind...flying airplanes. During high school he would play hooky to take flying lessons at the local airport, an extra-curricular activity that his parents did not find out about for some time. His family relocated to Silverlake, Illinois, where his father owned an auto repair shop. It was here that Charlie showed his determination not to be a mechanic by regularly taking naps under the vehicle he was supposed to be fixing. He first soloed in 1947 in a Piper J-3 Cub at the Kenosha, Wisconsin Airport.

In 1949, just out of high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force. He was later commissioned and received his Air Force pilot's wings in 1954.

During his service in the Air Force, he flew transport type aircraft including Fairchild C-119, C-123 and Lockheed

C-130. He received the Bronze Star and the Vietnamese Flying Wings for his service in Vietnam. He was one of the few people to operate a C-130 Hercules aircraft on skis, landing on the icecap in Greenland. During that operation, he provided Defense Early Warning Radar sites with supplies. The weather was severe on the Greenland icecap, occasionally covering entire radar sites with drifting snow.

After retiring from the Air Force in 1968 Charlie flew as an Airline Transport Pilot in commercial aviation in Alaska from 1969 to 2002.

From Alaska, he flew around the world delivering freight as Captain in a Lockheed L-382, the civilian version of the military C-130 Hercules aircraft. A pilot who flew with Charlie at Alaska International Air remembers his resourcefulness. The crew had landed a Herc load of oilfield supplies on the ramp in an Arab country in the Middle East and was ready to depart. The local aviation authorities had different ideas and were holding up the flight release. Knowing that there was work to be done, Charlie approached the authorities to see what arrangements could be made. He explained that he and the crew had flown over the beach a couple miles distant, it was a nice, well-populated beach, and he and the boys needed a couple days of rest. He explained that they would be happy to party with the girls on the beach and did not really care when they left. He was handed a flight release and the aircraft left on schedule. It didn't seem to matter where in the world Charlie was, he seemed to be able to work with all the different cultures on his terms.

Charlie was a consummate professional, always checking the gauges, the condition of the flight crew, and keeping track of the airplane's position. Even after hours of flight, he rarely let down his vigilance of the details, even though the crew would divide up the duties. One of the pilots who flew with Charlie in Hercs for Mark Air tells of one of the rare times that Charlie took a nap. It was a flight across the Atlantic, and it had been a long day. About an hour off the European Coast Charlie dozed off. The First Officer noticed Charlie's nodding head and whispered a plan to the rest of the crew. They turned the radio volume down and waited; Charlie slumbered on. They were over the lights of a large European city when they turned the volume back up and slumped in their seats pretending that they too were asleep. At the next radio transmission, Charlie awoke to the lights of Europe and the sight of a sleeping crew. Momentary pandemonium broke out in the cockpit, which ended in a good laugh. Charlie was razor sharp the rest of the trip.

Charlie was known for his ability to pass on information to the younger generation's new pilots, going out of his way to answer questions and educate his peers in those safe practices, which had made his career so successful. He was a "by the book" pilot and would become animated with those who operated differently. A pilot remembers serving as Flight Engineer in such a situation. The crew, composed of two Captains and the Flight Engineer, was scheduled to fly a DC-6 together one summer. The two captains would alternate the duties of Captain and First Officer. Charlie's way of flying by the numbers was not at all like the more relaxed style of the

other captain. This sparked many terse conversations between the two. The Flight Engineer remembers that summer as one where he had to fix more crew problems than aircraft problems. The key to the situation is that years later, both the Flight Engineer, who is now a Captain, and the other Captain still have the utmost respect for Charlie, because they both agreed that in the end Charlie was right. Charlie was also a Check Airman for various companies, which meant that he had the final responsibility to assure the readiness of the flight crews. He never addressed anyone using the title "Captain," unless something had gone wrong. A pilot who experienced this told of a checkride that had gone all wrong. Charlie, the pilot remembers, was very patient but he knew it was over when Charlie said, "Captain, take her on in and land."

Charlie is remembered as a passionate aviator who did things right and went out of his way to pass his interest on to those around him. Sadly, Charlie passed away in August 2005. He is survived by his wife Anna; their children Bob, Crystal, Daryl, Glen, and Allen; and many grandkids. Charlie's wife, Anna, and son, Daryl, are with us tonight to receive his award for a lifetime of aviation.